

July 10, 2011

**Letter from U.S. Ambassador Lee A. Feinstein
on the 70th Anniversary of the Jedwabne Massacre**

We remember today the crimes committed seventy years ago here in Jedwabne. People of this town lost their lives in acts of hatred and inhumanity against fellow citizens.

These crimes were committed when Poland was occupied by not one, but two, foreign powers – at a time when the Polish state was struggling for its survival. In a time of unparalleled turmoil, when the great powers of the world were occupied with drawn out campaigns across the globe, what happened in Jedwabne went silently unnoticed.

For years the terrible truth of what happened here went unknown to the world, shrouded in secrecy and denial. Now we know. And with this knowledge comes responsibility.

As we reflect upon the terrible acts committed here in 1941, it is important to recognize that atrocities like this occur when the world looks away from states that cannot or do not protect their citizens. We must never forget what happened here. And we must take lessons. We have a responsibility to protect those who have no one to stand up for them. This responsibility is one that Poland and the United States and the world's sovereign nations share. As President Obama said in his remarks on the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, we must not only bear witness, we must also resist anti-Semitism, bigotry, and ignorance in all its forms; and refuse to become bystanders to evil.

Poland today is a strong and thriving democracy, one based on mutual understanding, respect, and tolerance – all essential elements of Poland's centuries-old multicultural heritage. Through educational programs and projects to restore memory – including the memory of Poland's pre-War Jewish community – Poles have worked together to build a country that reflects commitment to democratic values and universal rights. Since 1989, Poles have readily acted to promote freedom, and uphold democracy and human rights outside their borders. Poles have taken this lesson from the painful chapters of their own history, and are working to share the blessings of their liberty with others who strive to emulate the success of Poland's post-1989 transformation.